

Remarks/Arguments:

The pending claims are 1-30 and 40-42. Claims 1-30 have been indicated as allowable. Claims 31-39 and 43-58 have been canceled. Claims 40-42 are not being amended with this response.

Claim rejections

Claims 40-42 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as unpatentable over U.S. Patent No. 5,122,154 to Rhodes ("Rhodes") in view of U.S. Patent No. 5,197,976 to Herweck et al. ("Herweck") and U.S. Patent No. 5,522,881 to Lentz ("Lentz"). Applicants respectfully traverse this rejection.

Claim 40 recites, *inter alia*, a multi-component bifurcating expandable supportive endoluminal graft comprising a plurality of expandable supportive endoluminal components adapted to be individually deployed at a selected location within a body vessel. One of the expandable supportive endoluminal components is a trunk component generally surrounding a trunk liner positioned within the trunk component. The trunk liner has a generally cylindrical body portion and two leg portions. At least one other of the expandable supportive endoluminal components is a generally cylindrical supportive leg component. *The generally cylindrical supportive leg component and one of the leg portions of the liner, when the leg component and trunk component have been fully deployed within the body vessel, are not connected to and are telescopically slidable with respect to each other.*

The Office Action acknowledges that Rhodes does not disclose a liner having two leg portions that abut and are secured to one another. Office Action, page 2, para. 3. The Office Action further acknowledges that the combination of Rhodes and Herweck fails to disclose cylindrical supportive leg components placed within the liner leg components. Office Action, page 2, para. 4. The Office Action alleges that Lentz teaches the use of supportive stent components placed within, but not connected to, a graft component to secure and seal the graft relative to the vessel. Office Action, page 2, para. 4. The Office Action further alleges that it would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art to have used supportive leg components in the liner leg components of the combination of Rhodes and Herweck to ensure that the leg components are secured and sealed relative to the vessel. Office Action, page 3, lines 1-4.

By way of example only, an exemplary embodiment of a multi-component bifurcating expandable supportive endoluminal graft recited in claim 40 is disclosed in FIGS. 21-23, which disclose a leg component 108 that is telescopically slidable with respect to a leg portion 109 of a

a trunk liner 122. The telescopic feature allows some slippage between the trunk component and the leg component. Application, Col. 11, lines 55-61. This slippage results in extension and/or compression of the length of the endoluminal graft.

Applicants respectfully submit that there is no suggestion in *any* of Rhodes, Herweck, or Lentz to provide a generally cylindrical supportive leg component and a leg portion of a trunk liner that are *telescopically slidable* with respect to each other. In general, for one component to be *telescopically slidable* with respect to a second component, one of those first and second components must be inserted into the other component, forming an overlap of the first and second components, with a corresponding extension or compression of the length of the device comprising the first and second components as the first and second components are slid with respect to each other.

While Lentz discloses that tubular body 12 with cuffs 20, 22 may be deployed first and then stents 28 may be inserted in a subsequent procedure (Lentz, Col. 4, lines 50-52), Lentz fails to disclose or suggest any type of *telescopic slidability* between stents 28 and body 12.

None of Rhodes, Herweck, or Lentz, however, disclose or suggest any type of graft assemblies in which a first component and a second component are individually deployed within a body vessel, with the first component having been inserted into a second component, with a corresponding extension or compression of the length of the device as the first and second components are slid with respect to each other.

Because the proposed combination fails to disclose or suggest all of the features of claim 40, namely, a *generally cylindrical supportive leg component and a trunk component generally surrounding a trunk liner having a leg portion, such that, when the leg component and trunk component have been fully deployed within a body vessel, the leg component and the leg portion are not connected to and are telescopically slidable with respect to each other*, Applicants respectfully submit that the proposed combination of Rhodes, Herweck, and Lentz fails to establish a *prima facie* case of obviousness.

Claims 41-42 depend from claim 40 and are allowable over the proposed combination for at least the same reasons set forth above with respect to claim 40. Applicants respectfully request reconsideration and allowance of claims 40-42.

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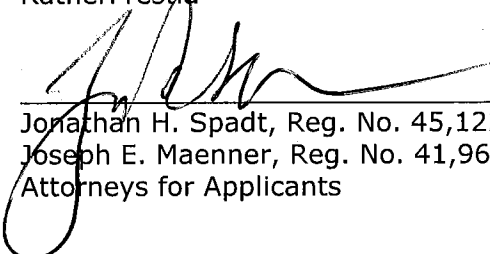
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Conclusion

Applicants respectfully submit that claims 1-30 and 40-42 are in condition for allowance and request an early indication of allowance.

Respectfully submitted,

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